

# THE BROKEN COIN

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## TWENTIETH INSTALLMENT

### SYNOPSIS.

Kitty Gray, newspaper woman, finds in a curio shop half of a broken coin, the mutilated inscription on which arouses her curiosity and leads her, at the order of her managing editor, to go to the principality of Gretzhoffen to piece out the story suggested by the inscription. She is followed, and on arrival in Gretzhoffen her adventures while chasing the secret of the broken coin begin.

### CHAPTER LXXIII.

#### The Broken Treaty.

In the palace of Gretzhoffen, King Michael's friends and courtiers, King Michael's officials, at last began slowly to recover from the period of dissipation into which they had plunged as an expression of their relief from the armed menace so recently at their walls. There is a limit to human possibilities in joy, in grief, in exaltation of any kind, even alcoholic. King Michael and his court ceased to drink because they could drink no more—the wine cup had ceased to furnish any fillip to their besotted brains.

Alone among all these others the prime minister of Gretzhoffen retained somewhat of his wits. Perhaps a stout heredity made him more impervious to the inroads of excess, or perhaps he had certain ambitions of his own which cannily suggested to him that it were better to remain in possession of all his faculties. At least, he was the first to call a halt in the carouse and to take some account of events past and future.

He looked about him at the wreck which had been wrought in the palace by its inmates—well-nigh as complete as that lately done by its enemies—looked at the stained rugs—the broken furniture, the disordered tables. His gaze passed by all this to rest upon the stupefied guests, of whom he now proceeded to make quick clearance.

Michael himself made no protest at this, for he knew little of what went on about him. On his mind still rested the obsession that he was celebrating a great victory of the Gretzhoffen arms and the Gretzhoffen diplomacy. To him, therefore, the prime minister now addressed himself in the hope of some partial restoration of order, some semblance of a government. Always he missed the strong mind and the strong arms of Count Frederick, now so mysteriously disappeared.

Across the narrow neutral lands which divided these two kingdoms, yonder in the capital of Gretzhoffen, a quite different state of affairs held place. No dissipation for old Cortislaw, and no celebration for any victory not actually in hand. Cortislaw planned war. As for his pledged word in the armistice and the later treaty, he had long since cast to the winds all this as a scrap of paper carrying no value whatever. Cortislaw signed treaties only to get something afterward. He had signed this one merely as a temporary expedient to extricate himself from a dangerous situation. That being done, the world began all over again for Cortislaw.

In due time Sachio returned from his bootless search in the vaults below the Gretzhoffen palace. He was full of apprehension, but none the less must face his sovereign.

"Your majesty," he began, when at length that dreaded interview was no longer to be evaded. He hesitated, and as he did so his monarch guessed his news was none too good.

"Well, well, Sachio, what is it that my majesty is to hear?" demanded Cortislaw. "More bad news? You have not won the secret—you have lost our last opportunity?"

"Sire, it is true! Thus far I have failed. But still—"

"You ask more time! Do you think time is as inexhaustible as a river. Let me tell you, it passes, with our hopes, with wings. Time—more time?—that is what you cannot have!"

"But your majesty—"

"Away with you, Sachio! I have parleyed with you for the last time. If I did not need you as an officer, your head indeed should hang on our gates as a warning to other failures."

"How can I serve your majesty?" asked Sachio humbly, glad enough to feel his head safe on his shoulders for yet another hour.

"Call out our army! Mobilize at once to the last man. See that the guns are ready with full ammunition trains. Call in the officers at once. See to it also that the ships are ready. We will attack at once by land and sea. Get you at once to the department of our navy, when you have finished your orders for the land forces, we must move at once."

"Whither, your majesty?"

"Where else if not against Gretzhoffen? If you could not find their secret at your leisure, I will blow down their towers and look among the ruins myself for whatever secrets they may hold. The gods of my ancestors would not let them rest in their graves if I accepted this situation as a rest for us today."

A certain relief came to the soul of Sachio as he heard these words. He was a soldier, and he reasoned that now in the opportunity for arms, he might win back something of his lost favor.

"It is well, your majesty," said he. "I shall carry your word at once to all the different departments. Your men are but waiting to follow you. Success will be easy for us now, for we know all their defenses now as well as our own. We shall win!"

"Yes," said Cortislaw, "we shall win. If it costs the life of every man, woman and child of this kingdom. I take charge now myself and trust no more boasters like certain advisers I could name. I grant you your place in your regiment, once more, Sachio. See if you can fail in that! If your men give back, I'll have my own guns of the guard behind them to blow them off the earth."

"Be not too hard upon me, your majesty! I admit my error in allowing that young girl to leave our shores—she could have told us the secret had she liked—all the secret of the Gretzhoffen coin. But we shall win yet, though at greater cost."

"You had your chance, Sachio. You did not handle the woman well. I thought you knew more."

"To handle a woman, your majesty," said Sachio "who ever knew enough for that?" I confess my fault and stand ready to pay my share of the added cost. True, we should have kept her until we had all she knew. 'Tis doubtful if she ever sees our shores again. We may see the face of some American admiral—see their battleships before our port—but as for her—never!"

"It is enough," said Cortislaw. "We march. We advance no more clinging to woman's skirts. It is our guileless now shall lead us to their city's streets."

### CHAPTER LXXIV.

#### The Rescue.

Those whose disappearance had made such havoc in the plans of a principality now likewise were upon the point of certain changes in their own plans—and counted that any change must be for the better.

"Look!" said Kitty as they stood at the crest of the cliff gazing out over the white-topped waves toward the nodding sails of the rapidly advancing craft. "A two-master, under heavy sail. Auxiliary, no doubt. What can she be?"

"It is what I also would ask," said Count Frederick at her side studying the craft as intently. "Whatever it be, it is our only hope. See, she seems to have the look of a yacht. Watch her bows as they rise and see how her spars rake

the natives and these new invaders—who, as now all could see, also were white people and hence to be dreaded.

Much of these operations was easily visible from the yacht's deck. Apparently there were some commands from the man who stood at the bow, binoculars in hand. Overboard went a pair of boats manned by stout oarsmen who swept them quickly toward the shore.

The man with the binoculars saw two figures on the beach, easily distinguishable from the savage ones around them. One was a man, and the other a boy, at first he thought. "White," he muttered to himself. "Refugees—castaways of some sort on this coast. How did they get here, I wonder? But by Jove! my fellows are giving the natives all they want, I'm thinking."

Such, indeed, was the case. The sailor men

beggars. And who are these new friends of ours? I am delighted if we have saved you from a bit of bad luck yonder. Neither of you hurt, I trust?"

He talked to Count Frederick but he looked at Kitty Gray.

"Fortunately not," replied Count Frederick. "I understand we are meeting Mr. Arthur Wyndham."

"Quite right, sir. You are refugees here?"

"No, sir, we are shipwrecked passengers of the Adler, lost at sea."

"Indeed, a shocking accident—no survivors reported. Most fortunate I sailed this way."

"This is Miss Kitty Gray," said Count Frederick, casting a keen eye upon his host and taking some reckoning of his evident late conviviality. "She is American. As for me, I am a citizen of the kingdom of Gretzhoffen."

Mr. Arthur Wyndham gathered no great sense

ing regained a trifle of her self-respect by the donning of some woman's garments which she found in the cabin, Kitty Gray's buoyant spirits began once more to assert themselves. As she looked at her face in the little mirror she spoke half aloud the resolution which she saw in the reflected features.

"I'm not going to England," said she. "I'm not going to America. I'm going back to Gretzhoffen, till my work is done! Surely they will put us down at that port—it is as near as any. Then—we shall see."

An hour later she returned to the deck to make her duties to her host more completely—little as she had been impressed by his personality or his conduct, which later she was ready to stigmatize as odious.

She met Count Frederick, much improved by a change to a well-fitting suit of flannels which he had found. He smiled now happily at seeing her. "You're looking ripping, mademoiselle!" said he. "I did not see you have that frock, on the island yonder."

"Nor did I notice that your trousers were so well pressed there!" retorted she.

At this moment Wyndham joined them. "I was just saying to Mr. Wyndham," said Count Frederick, "that we owed him a very great debt of gratitude, and that you—"

"Quite the other way about, I assure you," said Mr. Arthur Wyndham, the brewer's son, as he pressed somewhat too warmly the hand which Kitty extended him. "It is I who am the debtor. I swear, I never saw one change so much!"

His gaze, which passed over Kitty in her new apparel, was quite too languishing. Kitty Gray made such conversation as she could. Unconsciously she drifted to the side of Count Frederick, and finding herself there, wondered why she had done so. Once more she was alone, at the mercy of men. There was not another woman on this boat. But now, if it came to a choice, she knew which of these two men she would elect as her protector.

Count Frederick made some excuse and departed presently, so that Kitty found herself alone with Wyndham. She liked little enough the ardor of the gaze which he bent upon her now, and arose to leave him.

"You will excuse me?" said she. "I have forgotten something."

But as she turned she heard him stride suddenly toward her, felt his hand upon her arm.

"No, no!" said he. "Wait—why do you go? Finding you here—such a woman—saving your life and all that—do you think I am a man of stone—do you think—"

"I think you must excuse me," said Kitty Gray, feily.

"But you just said you owed a debt of gratitude."

"That any woman rescued from a peril owes to any gentleman."

"Oh, I say, come now!" he rejoined. "How about a little kiss to the honest sailor who was lucky enough to save your life! It's far from home or help, and no one knows—I say, now—"

She sprang from him with a startled scream, a name upon her lips which came readily enough when she needed aid.

Count Frederick heard her. He came at speed—and arrived just in time to see Mr. Wyndham pursuing his amorous advances to the extent of casting an arm about Kitty as she would have fled. The sight was enough. Without pausing for any question he sprang forward and sent Wyndham reeling against the corner of the cabin with one swift sweep of his arm. With the other arm he pushed Kitty away. An instant, and he had joined her and was half carrying her toward the door.

Sudden wrath now seized the soul of this gentleman lately attuned to softer emotions. "Stop!" he called out. His hand found a bell. The sound of quick footsteps came on the deck and men of the crew appeared at the door.

"Take him away!" sputtered Wyndham. "Put him in irons until I call for him! He is a thief!" Count Frederick, battling vigorously with those who laid hands upon him, disappeared at the door from which escape was now cut off for Kitty.

"Now you," said Wyndham to her, still sputtering, "you shall find out that on the sea the law of might still rules. I'll show you!"

Upon the contrary it was he, himself, who found out somewhat. The young American was as much a tigress as she had ever been in cases like this, of which she had known too many in her wanderings in these lands. She battled with him so furiously that he wondered whether between the two he was more apt to be victor or victim on his own yacht.

Frederick flung away from him, bruised and bleeding, the men who had undertaken to imprison him. A swift plan had come into his own mind. He heard the crackle of a wireless mast on the upper deck. An instant later he had sprung up the last stair and closed behind him the door of the operator's room.

At the key there sat a youth, the receivers of the equipment strapped to his ears. The crackle and roar of the wireless equipment, and the stoppers on his ears, left the operator unable to understand what was said to him; but he comprehended very quickly the language of the pistol muzzle which was shoved against his side—a pistol which he did not know was empty, but which he was quite convinced was wholly unlovely in its look.

Count Frederick bent above him and scribbled a few words on a bit of paper at the desk. His finger pointed to it as he nudged the muzzle of the pistol against the operator's ribs.

"Send this!" said he. "If you cut in on anything else I'll kill you!"

The operator looked down at the message.

"S. O. S., Gretzhoffen," it read. "S. O. S. one hundred and seventy-five miles south by south-west. Send Adeline, Frederick, Send Adeline. S. O. S. Frederick."

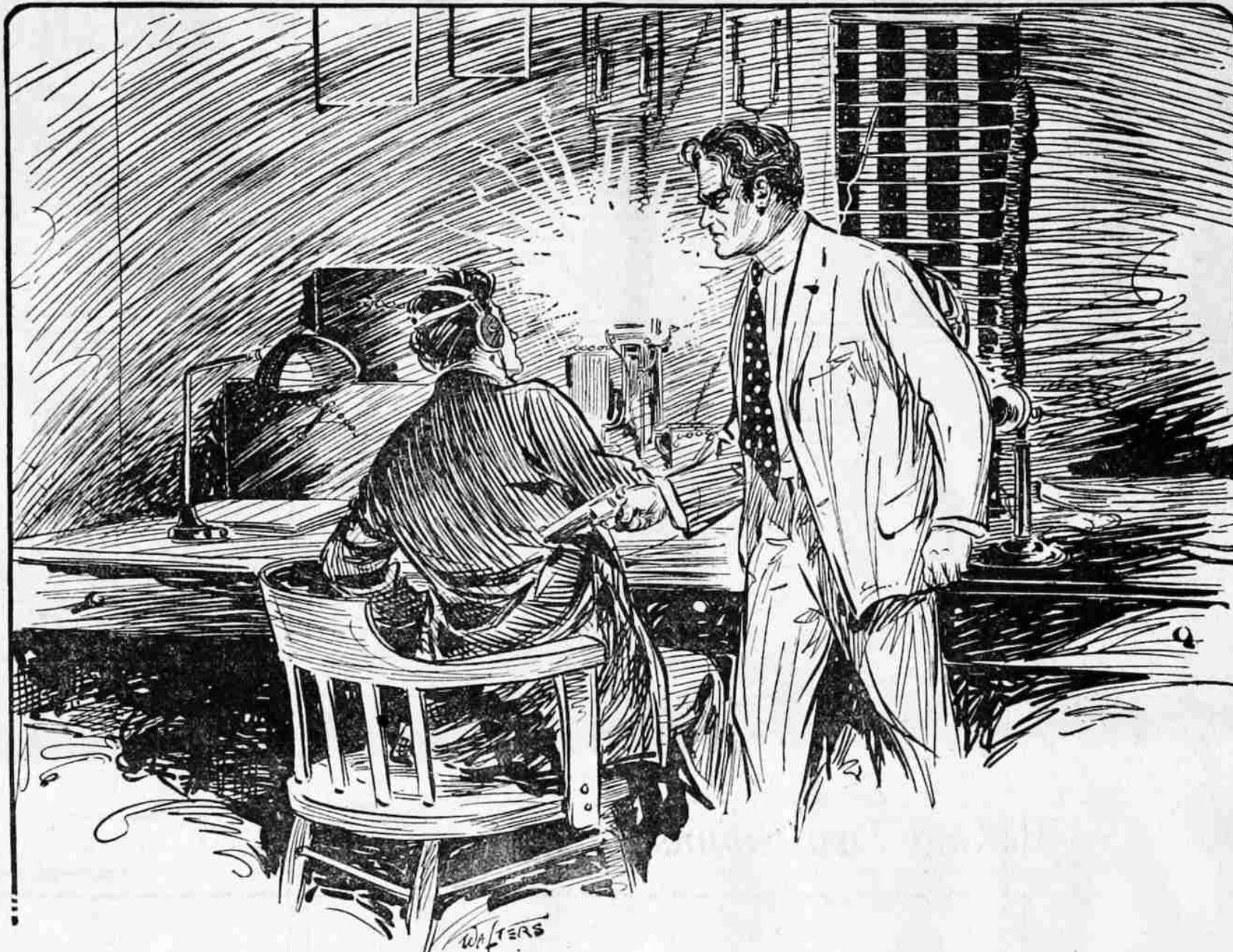
The operator looked up at Frederick curiously. "Who are you?" said he. "We're not sinking. I don't know Adeline."

"I'll sink you if you wink," said Count Frederick grimly. "Send! Do you hear me—send!"

Mechanically the fingers of the operator began to tap the keys. Out into the air from the antennas of the mast sprang the call: "S. O. S., Gretzhoffen . . . Adeline . . . Frederick . . ."

And even as this signal, this cry for help went out into the night, there came another cry from the lips of the helpless girl cowering in the corner of the room below. "Frederick, Frederick, come quick!"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)



"Send This!" Exclaimed Count Frederick. "If You Cut in on Anything Else I'll Kill You!"

back. A yacht—but whose, and what nationality?" "There comes their flag," said Kitty. "British!" "Well, I wish it were the flag of my own country, but better that than none."

"We shall be safe enough under the Union Jack," said Frederick. "I count on good treatment when they find out who we are."

She turned to him with a curious look upon her face.

"Say rather when they find out who you are, Count Frederick," said she. "You are a nobleman, I am an unknown American girl, cast away without a friend on earth."

He smiled at her as though amused.

"An American girl who has had place in the plans of two kingdoms. Perhaps you may not always remain so unknown, if it comes to that."

"Look!" Once more was her reply as she pointed to the boat.

A puff of smoke came from the bow of the yacht, followed presently by the dull boom of the small cannon mounted there.

"They see our signal," said Count Frederick. "Yes, she'll round to and send in a boat, no doubt." And indeed such proved to be the plans of the little vessel.

There were other results of the cannon shot which might not have been suspected. The natives, scattered here and there along the beach, in the forest, or in their village, were seized with a sudden terror of what they imagined to be a new enemy. As fast as they could they scuttled for shelter in the woods or in the caverns that lay below the hills, the greater number finding refuge in the latter hiding places. Of these, some made their way in their terror quite through the series of caverns until at length they emerged at the crest of the cliff by way of the passage which had brought Frederick and Kitty there at an earlier time.

These found the summit of the rock already occupied. The two strangers who had caused all the turmoil in the village stood at the summit looking out at the sea, and waving signals to the incoming vessel. For an instant the natives stood irresolute, but it was not for long. They identified these two white strangers, whoever or whatever they might be, alike with these past disturbances and these new terrors. Whereupon with savage shouts they once more fell upon the unfortunates and made them prisoners again.

To the left, across a bare ledge of rock which showed no trace of it, there led a path whose presence Frederick had not suspected. It was down this new passageway that the natives now led Kitty and Count Frederick. They passed down a steep declivity covered with trees and at length found their way to the lower beach, where after a time they were joined by others who cautiously had emerged from their hiding places. It plainly was the purpose of all these now to complete the sacrifice which had been arrested by the escape of the victim a few days ago. They inflicted preliminary indignities upon them, at least, whether with the intention of hurrying them to the sacrificial fire, or of obliging them to interpose between

plunged through the surf as their keels touched bottom and came on at a run, rifles in hand and firing as they came, with the effect that half a dozen of the savages fell. The others scattered like sheep and left the captives standing there dazed, yet happy at their deliverance. The petty officer in charge of the landing came up to Count Frederick and saluted. He seemed to recognize him, tattered as he was, a man of former authority. "How do you do, your honor?" said he. "We came just in time."

"Yes, my men, and we thank you. Who are you?" "Private Yacht Princess, Liverpool registry, owned by Arthur Wyndham. He's on board, sir—shall we take you off?"

"Certainly, as quickly as possible. But have you any water in the boat? We have had none for more than two days."

The sailor turned toward the speaker's companion whose garb was scarce that of a lady, but whose form and features surely seemed such.

"Do you mean to say that this young lady?" he began.

"Yes, she has not had a bite to eat nor a drop of water in two days."

"Come quick, sir, then. We've a water breaker in our longboat. Have you anything to fetch along?"

Count Frederick laughed at this and even Kitty smiled.

"You see us as we are," said Count Frederick. "We were castaways here, shipwrecked from the steamer Adler."

"Oh, yes, we heard of that. I see, I see—it is most fortunate we came this way."

"How far must that have been from shore where she went down?"

"Perhaps a hundred and seventy-five miles from her port of departure. You're half that distance, here, from where she went down, as near as we can tell. No other survivors have been picked up so far as we heard. How have you got on here?"

Count Frederick shrugged his shoulders. "They'd have burned us both if you had not come. If you had not seen us we'd have starved."

"Handsome luck, sir! But who are you, if I may ask?"

"You may take us aboard," said Count Frederick with dignity. "You said your owner's name was—"

"Wyndham, sir; Mr. Arthur Wyndham of Hantes."

He touched his hat now and led the way to the boatside where ready hands offered water to the two famished castaways.

On board the Princess Mr. Arthur Wyndham, owner of the boat and her cargo, solid or spirituous—he had been perhaps more devoted to the latter portion these last few days—still stood with his glasses at his eyes. "By Jove!" said he, "that boy is a girl, and the girl is a young woman, bless my eyes!"

Not displeased at this, he greeted the two newcomers at the ship's ladder when the boat brought them alongside.

"Well done, Parsons," said he to his boat steerer. "I saw you bag a half dozen of those

of the speaker's importance. His eyes were fixed upon Kitty Gray rather too covetously. "So you got away when she struck?" he went on carelessly.

"She did not strike," corrected Count Frederick. "She was blown up by an accident."

"Too bad, too bad—well, well. But I say, perhaps the young lady would like to change? There may be some sort of woman's togs in the cabin below. My sister comes aboard once in a while, you know!" And he essayed a portentous wink aside at Count Frederick.

"That will be agreeable, I am sure," replied Count Frederick quietly, "and if you could send down to the young lady's cabin a bit to eat and a carafe of water, I am sure it will be appreciated. She has had neither food nor drink for more than two days, sir."

"Nor has he—my friend," said Kitty Gray, smiling faintly.

"God bless my soul!" said Mr. Wyndham. "I never thought of that. Send you down some wine—send you down a brace of stout if you like, I can recommend it—my father makes it, don't you see?"

Count Frederick, liking his new surroundings only by comparison with those he recently had left, signed to Kitty Gray and presently the two, conducted by boat stewards, departed for the cabins to which they were assigned by the owner of the boat. The latter, whether from his late imbibings or through the effect of the beautiful young girl's presence, evidently was what the French call tete-monte.

### CHAPTER LXXV.

#### The Signal.

Alone for a moment, Kitty looked hastily about to see that she was not observed. Then she drew from her bosom a crinkled bit of parchment of whose existence not even Count Frederick was aware. This was her sole souvenir, her one bit of treasure-trove from the savage island. She was not sure that it had any value. Only, curiously enough, it impressed her as being like another certain bit of parchment of which Count Sachio had robbed her. As yet she could not decipher the torn half-legible scrawl.

How came she by it, and why? She herself could scarcely have told why she had paused to take it from the pocket of the dead sailor in the cavern when, just before their flight, she had thought herself that possibly he bore upon his person some proof of his identity. Thus far she had not had time to look at the soiled and crumpled bit. She concealed it now—in her mind the growing suspicion that providentially she might have been put in possession of the other half of the torn paper which Sachio had coveted! She had ceased to wonder at fortune's caprices now and soon indeed all thought of this torn parchment was banished from her mind. She forgot that possibly it also spoke of broken coins or treasure chambers, or other things of ancient history in these lands whose very stones had stories could they tell them.

Restored somewhat by food and drink, and hav-